

Extract from the Charity Commission Annual Report 1996

Safeguarding the sector

127. INTERPAL was registered in 1994 with the aim of providing aid to needy and sick children and widows of those who are missing or detained, and to those detained themselves, as a consequence of civil or military action or national disasters. The charity confines its activities to Palestine and Palestinian refugees. Our investigation into the activities of INTERPAL was prompted by allegations in the press that there was a connection between the charity INTERPAL and the group Hamas. It was suggested that the charity part funded that group.
128. Where a charity's beneficiaries are overseas our powers of investigation in the locations where funds are distributed are often limited. Our primary concern was to ensure that the trustees had taken reasonable all steps to ensure that funds were being used within the objects of the charity and within the law. We anticipated that Hamas will have supporters in the areas where INTERPAL distributes aid. Relief cannot be denied to them because of that support but at the same time we needed to ensure, to the best of our abilities, that funds were not being given solely because of a person's support for Hamas. Poverty and need should be the only criteria used when deciding how the charity's funds should be distributed.
129. We scrutinised in detail the charity's controls and records. They were well organised and we found no evidence of any donations that could not be accounted for or that had been given for political reasons. All of the evidence that we obtained suggests that INTERPAL is independent and non-profit making. Scrutiny of the charity's publicity and documentation provided no evidence of any pro-terrorist or anti-Israeli propaganda and interviews with the trustees and staff suggested that they were motivated by faith and altruism rather than fanaticism.